

DATE: March 9 2021

TO: Walpole Zoning Board of Appeals
John Lee Chair

FROM: William T Hamilton - Representative Town Meeting Member Precinct 5 South Walpole (508) 668-7877

RE: Public Comment Submission Omni Development LLC 55 Summer Street 40B 3/15/2021 second

I recognize the need for affordable housing in Walpole, and many units are being or have been built recently in Walpole. In my opinion the Omni project is a very bad attempt to build more affordable units in Walpole. It is bad, because it is proposed over one of our great aquifers that have a hydraulic connection to the School Meadow Brook Wellfield. The Town of Walpole's drinking water is under stresses, and a past 40B the Preserve was built over another great aquifer with a hydraulic connection to the School Meadow Brook Wellfield. Omni's 40B project is also proposed in our public water supply aquifer.

In addition Omni can cause fire safety to become a problem in South Walpole. South Walpole is its own Water Pressure District. Omni will double the South Walpole population, which will be using a single water tank located in the highest part of South Walpole. The single water tank that is providing the pressure that South Walpole's residents need when they turn the faucet expecting water to come out. That same pressure is relied on by the fire fighters to suppress fires. Omni plans on adding two very large six story apartment buildings with sprinkler systems. Alone such large sprinkled buildings can draw the water level in the single tank below the firefighting safety level that fire fighters must have. This would leave property owners and residents of South Walpole with gaps in their fire protection, or no fire protection when needed.

Omni will make the most dangerous railroad ground crossing in North America more dangerous. CSX abandoned the Summer Street railroad ground crossing, because it could not make it safe. The MBTA took it over to provide passenger train service to Gillette Stadium and has not made it safe. The Walpole Select Board and guests were at the Summer Street ground crossing to have a Police Officer use a Radar Gun to clock the speed of the MBTA train bringing fans to a Patriots game at the stadium. All the safety equipment failed gates everything and the MBTA passenger train roared across Summer Street without any warning (NONE). The MBTA claimed it was a timing problem, however, it has come to light that an Electro-magnetic device can cause this type of failure. The MBTA has no defense for this Electro-magnetic threat.

Omni's has only one entrance exit, which abuts the MBTA railroad ground crossing. The MBTA has not made the ground crossing safe by installing four quad gates controlled by radar and inferred to prevent collisions with vehicles stuck on the tracks. CSX didn't have the footprint needed to install four quad gates. Radar control and inferred sensing could not be used because the line of sight was too little, because of the curvature of the tracks and the tunnel under Rt. 1 that the train passes through. I suspect the MBTA has the same unsolvable problems CSX had. The remaining solution involves placing concrete barriers with pedestrian fencing on top on both sides of the tracks going across Summer Street creating an incredible hardship for the residents of South Walpole including the residents of the proposed Omni 40B project. The residents of the Omni 40B would be stranded without access to Route one and the establishments on Route one. This would cause property values to plummet. The MBTA is not servicing the public good. It is servicing a private party Gillette Stadium. Of course, the MBTA can abandon the crossing as CSX did.

Omni's emergency exit is so dangerous a three Police Officer Detail is needed for the Fire Fighters to use it. To immediately provide a three Police Officers Detail would mean the Offices on duty would have to cover until the details could be filled. This would leave the property owners and residents in Walpole with a gap in their Police protection. The emergency exit has no line of sight to see vehicles coming from around a bend and down a hill it is a blind driveway. On a wet slippery day it is extremely dangerous. Omni is attempting to take advantage of a grandfather driveway curb cut. I can't believe the Planning Board would approve any additional use for this driveway curb cut. Omni needs it because if an MBTA passenger train collides with a vehicle on the Summer Street Ground crossing it is more likely than not that a derailment will block the only entrance and exit of the Omni 40B development of 300 units.

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